

Questions about Red Light Cameras

Q: What is the public's perception of red light camera programs?

As the Auditor's report notes, red light cameras are an effective traffic safety tool. However, these programs have come under increased public scrutiny resulting in lawsuits and a call for an audit. The auditor's report found that there are problems:

Existing law relating to government's responsibility for controlling red light camera vendors is vague, leaving the program susceptible to public criticism and legal challenges. When the government entity does not maintain controls and oversight - the vendor then has too much discretion.

Paying vendors on the number of tickets issued undermines the public's trust and raises the concern that these system can be manipulated for profit.

My bill addresses both of these concerns.

The bill specifies what essential government functions cannot be assumed by the vendor and prohibits fee per ticket arrangements, among other reforms.

Q: What's the problem with how tickets are processed?

Currently some local governments do not have specific guidelines with regard to how tickets are screened and processed, nor - in some cases, are there sufficient controls ensure that only citations approved by law enforcement are delivered to alleged violators. This measure will address both of these issues. Further, in some cases, confidential information is not correctly handled to assure privacy. This measure enhances the confidentiality requirements in existing law.

Q: What's the problem with the current process for selecting intersections?

There is a problem when the intersection is selected based solely on traffic volume. Selecting based on traffic volume suggests that the intersection is picked because of revenue potential. There must be a traffic safety reason for selecting an intersection. Red light cameras were authorized to reduce crashes, not to enhance revenue.

What's the problem with the current process for selecting intersections.

There is a problem when the intersection is selected based solely on traffic volume. Selecting based on traffic volume suggests that the intersection is picked because of revenue potential. There must be a traffic safety reason for selecting an intersection. Red light cameras were authorized to reduce crashes, not to enhance revenue.

Q: Is red light running a big problem?

Yes, red light traffic violations were responsible for over 25,000 crashes causing 93 fatalities and nearly 15,000 injuries in California in 2000 - according to the Auditor's Report.

Q: Isn't conventional enforcement enough?

While ideally the most effective means of enforcing the law involves the use of visible on-site law enforcement officers, local resource constraints make this scenario highly unlikely and red light cameras have been shown to reduce red light running in the absence of a traffic officer.

Q: Why do we need a photo of the driver?

Current law requires that in order to issue a citation relative to a red light camera there must be a clear photograph of the vehicle's license plate and the driver of the vehicle. The specific purpose of these provisions is to identify and find those persons whose conduct is truly unsafe while providing due process protections for innocent vehicle owners whom may not have been responsible for the violation.

In California, we don't want to weaken the law - to only allow a photo of the license plate - which means you have to treat, is like a parking violation. We think it should be treated as the serious violation that it is.... With the same penalty whether stopped by a traffic or photographed by a camera.